



Europeans cinch their safety belts

by Robyn Boyle

As the number of flights in an already congested European airspace increase at a rate of nearly four percent per year and the European Union (EU) drafts more and more regulations directly affecting the end-users of business aircraft, one standardised set of safety standards and best practices becomes more imperative than ever before.

The safety record in business aviation is quite good, with a 2007 study by Eurocontrol showing that flying in a business jet is safer than taking a car, and is comparable to travelling by train. There is, however, always room for improvement. Over the course of five years, Eurocontrol estimated a worldwide total of 509 accidents. The study examined business turbine powered aeroplanes, and found that 72% of the accidents were related to turboprop aircraft, while 28% took place with jets.

At this year's European Business Aviation Conference and Exhibition (EBACE), during a business aircraft safety session on May 19, experts agreed that despite European business aviation's long-standing reputation for safety, the industry must step up its efforts in this area. "The aviation organisation...can

and should provide incentives that motivate individual airmanship improvement," according to Dr. Tony Kern, CEO at Convergent Knowledge Solutions. "Second, the organisation should be a resource provider, (offering) airmanship education and training materials."

This is where the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) comes into play. Created in 2003 to replace Europe's Joint Aviation Authority (JAA), EASA was the answer to the European Commission's (EC) need for a pan-European regulator with the power to legislate and enforce safety standards across the member states of the EU. Whereas the JAA dealt primarily with technical specifications such as maximum wing-loading, emergency exits, etc., EASA's responsibilities have been extended to include more complex issues, from pilot training and

flight time limitations to fuel load and environmental protection. The EC also created EASA as a means to transform various national procedures into one uniform set of rules, thereby reducing bureaucracy and costs.

"The Aviation Safety Agency has three main missions," states Patrick Goudou, Executive Director of EASA, "to draft air safety regulations, to certify aeronautical products, and thirdly, and this is important in Europe, when member states are implementing European regulations, we have to make sure they are doing so properly." In addition, the European Parliament has recently extended EASA's rulemaking activities to cover air operations, flight crew licensing and authorisation of third-country operators.

Benefits of IS-BAO Implementation

The need to develop a standard for safe operations tailored to the way corporate operators fly is what led the International Business Aviation Council (IBAC) to develop a programme called the International Standard for Business Aircraft Operations (IS-BAO). First introduced at EBACE 2002, the IS-BAO is seen as the benchmark standard for business aviation operations, providing a set of performance-based standards readily implementable by owner-operators, flight departments and a number of charter operators. It is a code of best practices developed by the industry, for the benefit of the industry, with an aim to help flight departments achieve a high level of safety and professionalism.

Aside from the obvious clarity that comes from proactive risk management, there are a number of benefits to voluntarily subjecting your crew to a thorough investigation of operations, from training and personnel to aircraft maintenance and emergency response. For example, a study completed by an independent safety analyst shows that the IS-BAO 'code of practice' has a considerable potential to reduce accidents. Some accredited operators have reported sig-

nificantly reduced insurance premiums, with many insurers confirming that they do take IS-BAO registration into consideration when determining insurance rates. Another advantage is the consequent ability to instill confidence in your Board of Directors simply by presenting them with your proof of certification. As an additional plus, many operators claim that going through the registration process served as a positive team-building exercise for their flight department.

Safety is, of course, one of your top priorities. But are your operations prepared to undergo an extensive audit programme? And what should be your motivation for doing so?



Getting started

Once you've decided to go through the registration process, keep in mind that IS-BAO is a flexible system offering continuous guidance. You will not only receive the set of standards, but a wealth of associated guidance material as well.

The first step is ordering an IS-BAO manual from the European Business Aviation Association (EBAA). It is also highly recommended that you register for one of the many IS-BAO workshops available to assist operators who are implementing, or considering implementing, the programme. The workshops are also targeted at potential IS-BAO auditors seeking creditation and any other interested parties.

Certification of Registration

After undergoing a successful audit by an accredited third-party auditor, your flight department will receive a Certificate of Registration from IBAC. This certification demonstrates that your flight department adheres to an internationally recognised 'code of best practice' and is valid for two years, after which time another audit becomes necessary.

Continuous learning

Dedication to improving safety in the industry does not stop at certification. IS-BAO is kept current with new best practices in the industry, new air traffic procedures and new equipment requirements and technology.

IBAC currently has a couple of new initiatives under development which are meant to provide additional assistance to operators. The SMS Tool Kit will help operators develop new Safety Management Systems (SMS). Introduced in response to global standards set by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the new Tool Kit is a step-by-step guide for implementing new safety requirements. Associations continue to encourage operators to implement the standard IS-BAO, but for those who would just like to implement SMS in order to satisfy regulations, the Tool Kit will provide guidance. It is planned to be available to operators in October 2008. In addition, IBAC will team with Flight Safety International to create an online training session to further assist operators on implementing and managing SMS programmes.

The following websites provide substantial information on the International Standard for Business Aircraft Operations:

www.ebaa.org

www.ebaa.aero

www.flightsafety.com

www.flightsafety.org

www.ibac.org

www.icao.int



Borescope inspection of a CFM56-5B at Villaroche



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